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Investigations in Mixed-media Printmaking

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INVESTIGATIONS IN MIXED-MEDIA PRINTMAKING

A Supplement to a Creative Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate Faculty
Central Washington State College

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by
Jerold H. Powell
August 1970

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"The relationship of many an American to his automobile goes so far beyond usefulness that it can be best described as a love affair. He regards it as a symbol of independence and prosperity, as something to be admired."

Faulkner
Art Today
P. 301

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SURVEY OF THE STUDY

The device man uses to transport himself is one of his dearest possessions and one of his biggest problems. The relationship between man and his machine is the basis for the content of this thesis. Since walking became impractical, men have grown dependent physically, emotionally, psychologically, economically, and socially on a personal means of transportation.

My own ideas and experiences are the source for the content of this series of works. From childhood one of my main interests has been with objects on wheels. I cannot remember having many playthings that did not incorporate the use of wheels. These mechanical devices have been a dominant influence in my life. I began operating vehicles when I was fifteen years old and have been doing so ever since. I raced motorcycles as an amateur and for several years have attended various racing events. In the past year I have ridden a motorcycle over fourteen hundred miles. Approximately half of this travel was in western Europe. I have had the opportunity to observe and be involved with people who cannot exist without one or more sets of wheels. It is from these experiences that my theme was realized.

When he steps into or mounts his particular machine,

a man becomes more than himself. The machine and the operator's physical and intellectual selves merge. The machine is the man. The man-machine has a sense of power that does not exist when the two halves are not united in motion and physical contact.

Men invest their whole beings and fortunes in machines to carry them through their lives and often to their deaths. A man's means of transportation has always been more than just a way to propel his physical being from one point to another. The type and number of vehicles in a person's possession indicate his economic and social position in many instances and often times may give insights into his personality.

Some who own vehicles tend to think of them as animate. I have found myself on many occasions directing conversation at the motorcycle. I house it, groom it, worry about it, and for some reason think of it as having a sexual identity of female. I believe that in part this attitude could be traced to times when men used animals as the means of transportation. Attaching sexual identity to a machine is difficult for me to explain, but on many occasions I have heard individual references to a car or motorcycle as she, her, the old girl, etc. Sailors regard ships as female, as do aircraft pilots their planes. When I am involved, dependent, and derive so much enjoyment from

such an object as the motorcycle I find it difficult to regard it as non-feeling and inanimate.

DEFINITIONS OF TERMS

Collagraph

A plate constructed of heavy cardboard utilizing materials that can be glued, lacquered, incised, textured and painted.

Etching

The process of removing and texturing desired surfaces of a metal plate by the use of acid.

Acid

In this study, a mixture of seven parts water to one part nitric acid.

Aquatint

The application of rosin powder to a metal plate forming small dots of material that resist the acid. The result is a fine uniform texture.

Time Bite

In this study, the length of time the plate with the applied aquatint is left in the acid to achieve a certain depth for value.

Aquatint Box

Specially constructed box with blower to stir up

the powdered rosin in order to achieve a uniform coating of aquatint.

Serigraphy

Silk screen process in which ink is applied through a stencil attached to a silk mesh with a squeegee.

Intaglio

Process of printing where ink is left in depressions and textures below the surface of the metal plate. Excess ink is wiped away from the surface.

Airbrush

A small device that sprays ink and other pigments. It operates along the same principle as an automotive spray gun. It sprays extremely fine patterns and is available in various sizes.

The forms of printmaking that were used in this series are Collagraph, Serigraphy and Etching. The drawings are executed in soft lead pencil on medium weight drawing paper. The prints are generally variations from the drawings. The two exceptions are the last drawing and print in the series. These works are a deviation from the main theme but not totally divorced from it.

The purpose in using aquatint and zinc plates in the etchings were as follows. Aquatint allows uniform

uncomplicated values changes and a mat texture. It is easily applied and when the application is properly executed the aquatint can endure several baths in the acid without breaking down. Zinc plates, because of their nature, allow fast biting and the specially treated backs (which are impervious to acid) reduce the preparation time.

The greatest technical problem with the metal plates was to arrive at the correct biting time with no error. This was accomplished by making test plates. The aquatint was applied to small squares of the zinc and then they were etched for a precise period of time. The variation in the amount of time the test plate is in the acid determines the degree of value on the plate. The times are then recorded in a formula book and can be used repeatedly.

The acid is a mixture of seven parts water to one part nitric acid. In order to achieve uniformity in the controlled bite process, the acid has to be properly stored and sealed when not in use. The evaporation of the water changes the acid's strength, and this in turn will affect the character of the bite of the aquatint.

Collagraph plates were used for embossing the printing paper without inking the plate. The nature of the materials, such as cardboard and matboard, allows the construction of plates with varying depths much more quickly than with metal plates. The materials are easily handled by cutting, gluing, and lacquering the plate surfaces.

Serigraphy and stencils allowed application of areas of color with simplicity and a smooth uniform appearance. Problems in coverage arose with the use of Speedball oil base metallic inks. The inks are too heavy in consistency to go through the silk mesh when they are used directly from the tube. The inks, if adequate thinner or extender are used, tend to become transparent and coverage over darker backgrounds is difficult. I found by adding small amounts of extender and then heating the inks that they would apply satisfactorily.

The airbrush and aerosol paint allowed simple but effective statements about volume and form. The nature of the airbrush allows smooth controlled application of the ink. The aerosol paint was used to achieve smooth glossy surfaces.

The mounting and matting of the prints, in some instances, were explorations into the possibilities of escaping the traditional practice of square mats with measured margins. I have not placed the usual written material in the lower margin because I feel it detracts from the actual print, and in some prints I have eliminated the margin. I feel that even my signature is unnecessary and all written items including the signature are found on the backs of the works. The use of plexiglas, mirrors, and building sculptural forms are some of the variations in the prints. The purpose in utilizing

these materials is an investigation into the possibility of making prints become three dimensional works. The idea of getting prints away from two dimensions is a concept I intend to explore in depth in the future. Explanations of techniques accompany the individual illustrations.

The various media mentioned allowed me to execute my ideas directly and in an uncomplicated fashion. I wished to avoid exaggerated use of line, texture, and color combinations that have seemed to dominate print-making technique. I have simplified the statements that I have made in these works as much as I can without losing the implications intended.

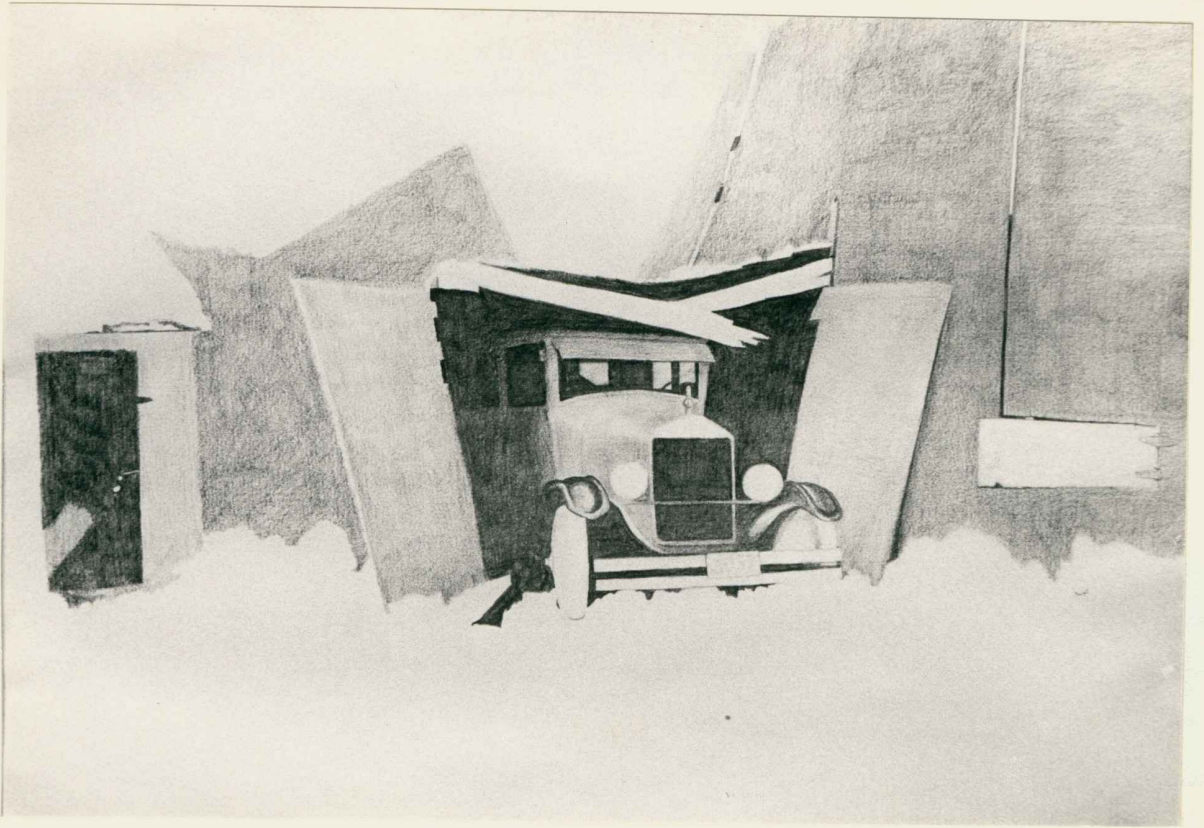


Figure 1
Soft Lead Pencil
(18" x 24")

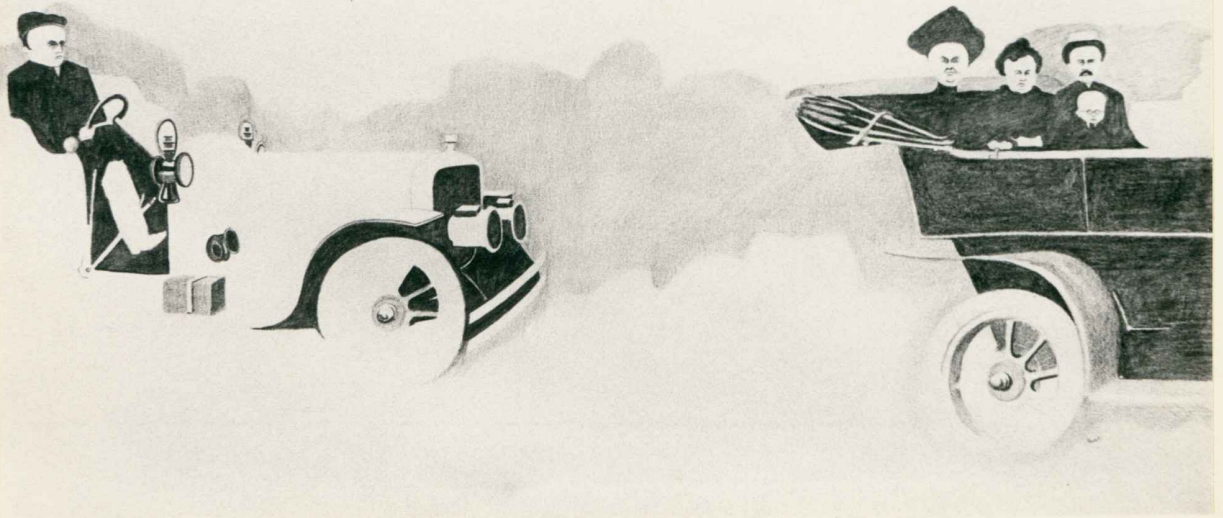


Figure 2

Soft Lead Pencil
(18" x 24")

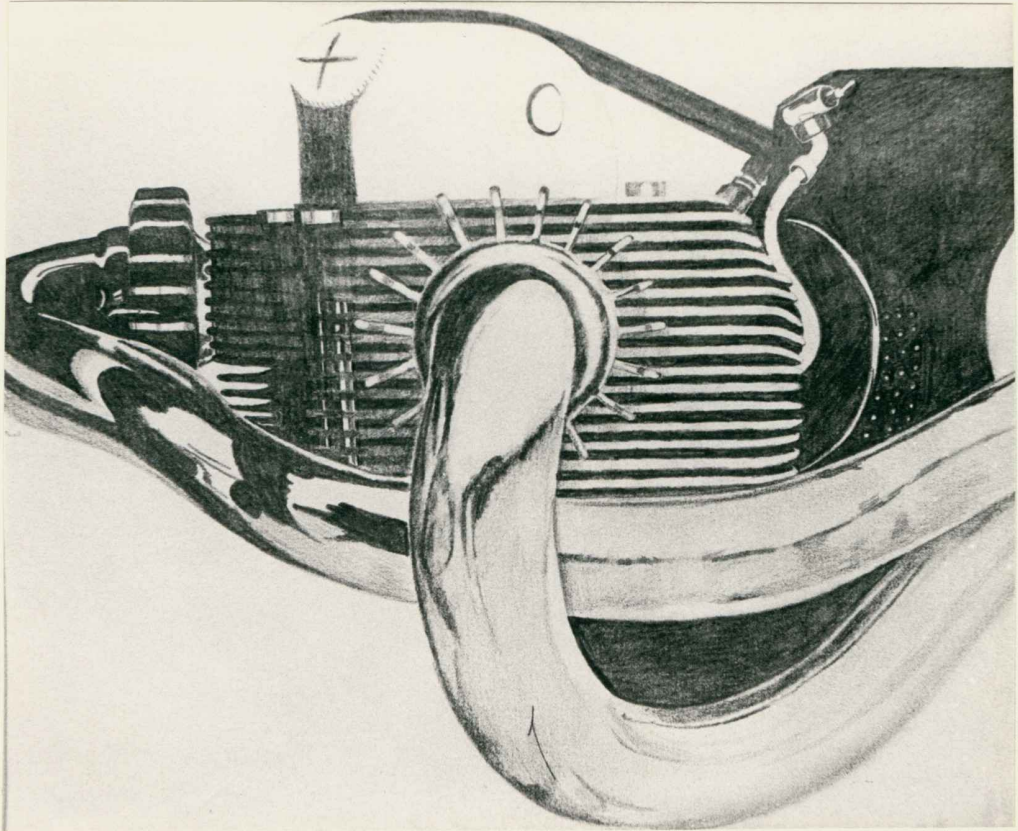


Figure 3
Soft Lead Pencil
(18" x 24")

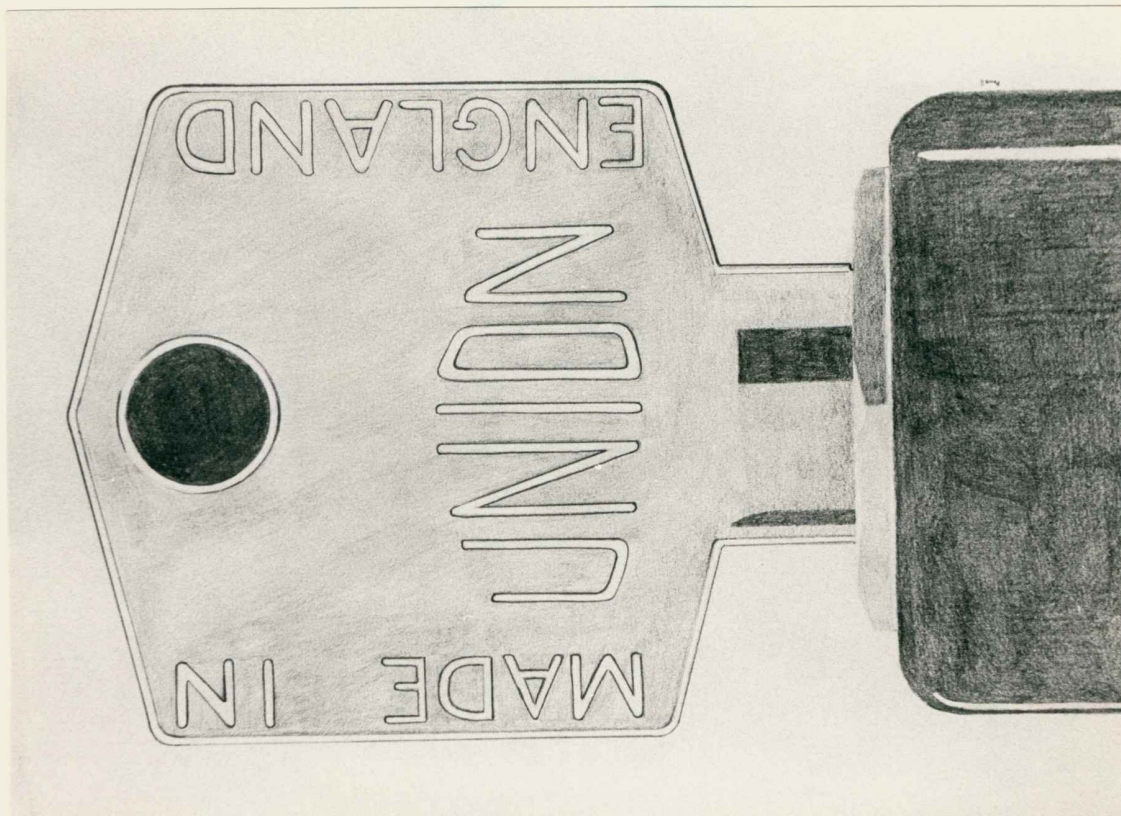


Figure 4

Soft Lead Pencil
(18" x 24")



Figure 5
Soft Lead Pencil
(18" x 24")

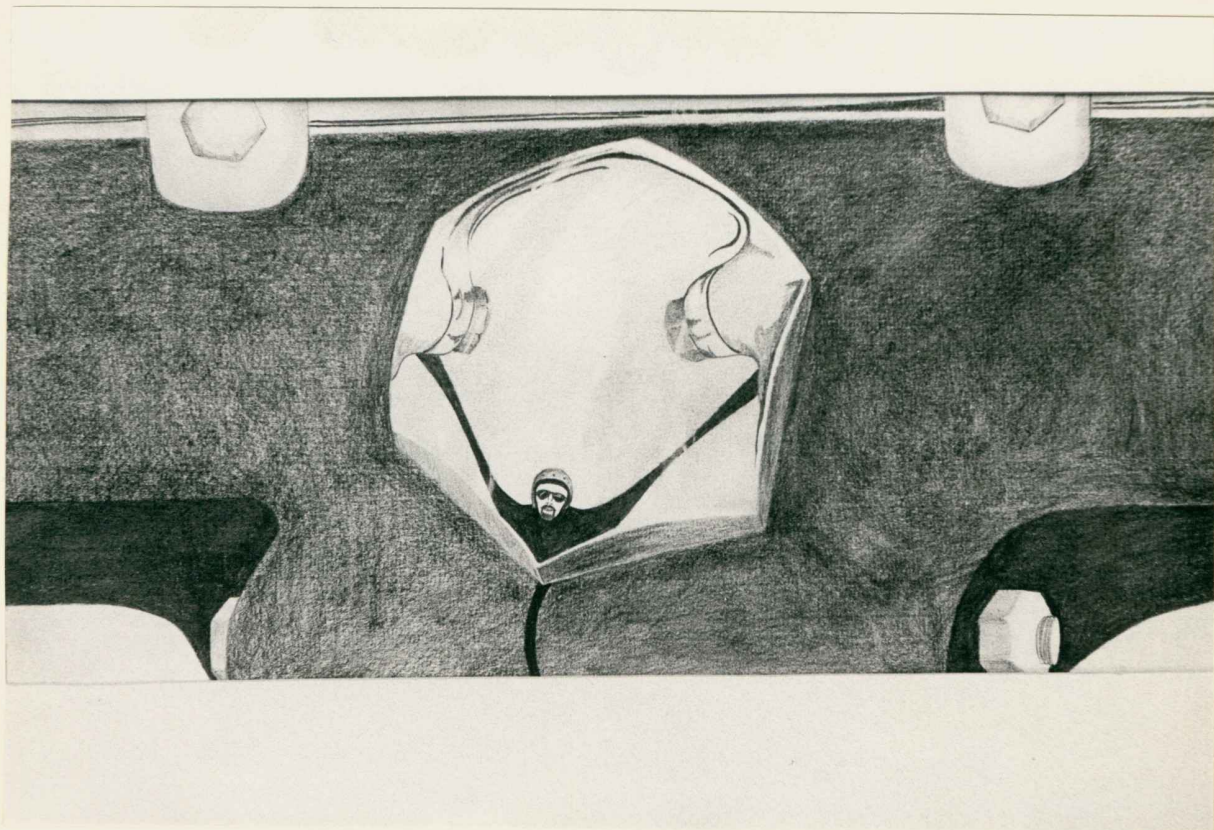


Figure 6
Soft Lead Pencil
(18" x 10")



Figure 7
Soft Lead Pencil
(18" x 24")

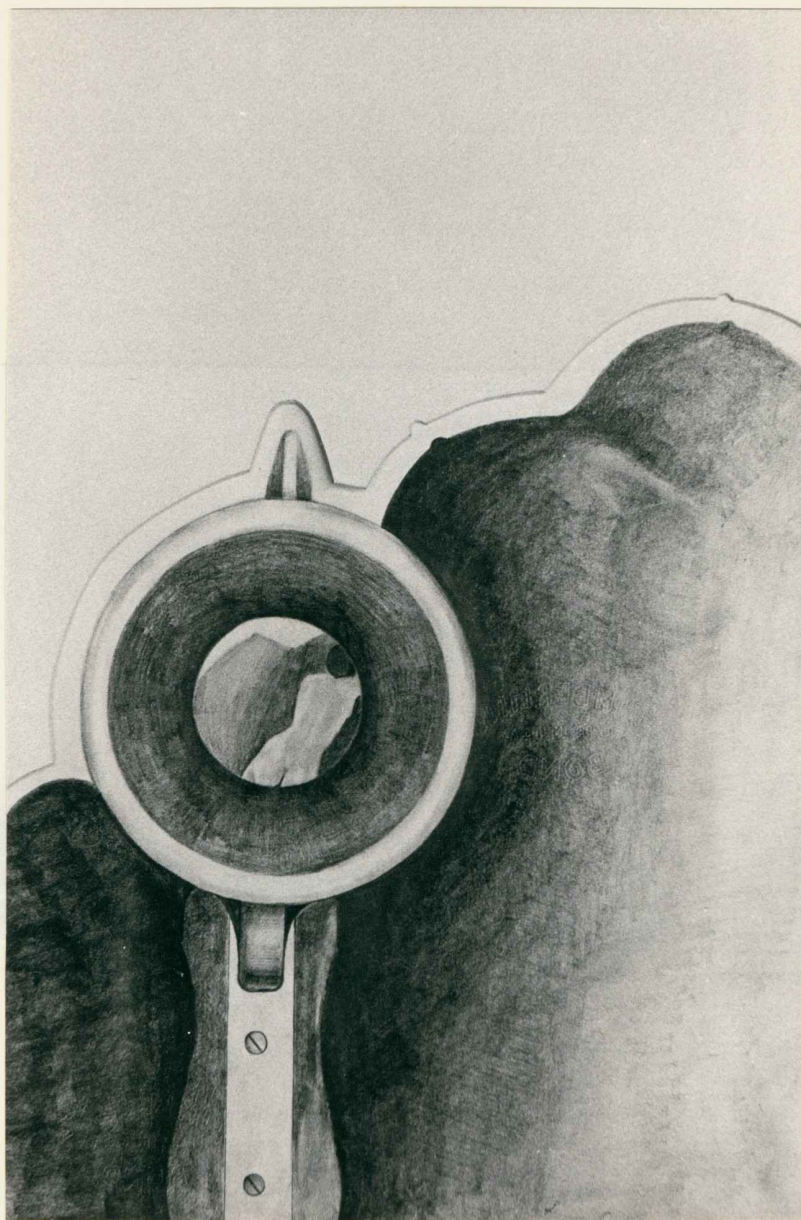


Figure 8
Soft Lead Pencil
(18" x 24")



Figure 9

Zinc Etching, Plexiglas and Aluminum
(27" x 18½" x 5")

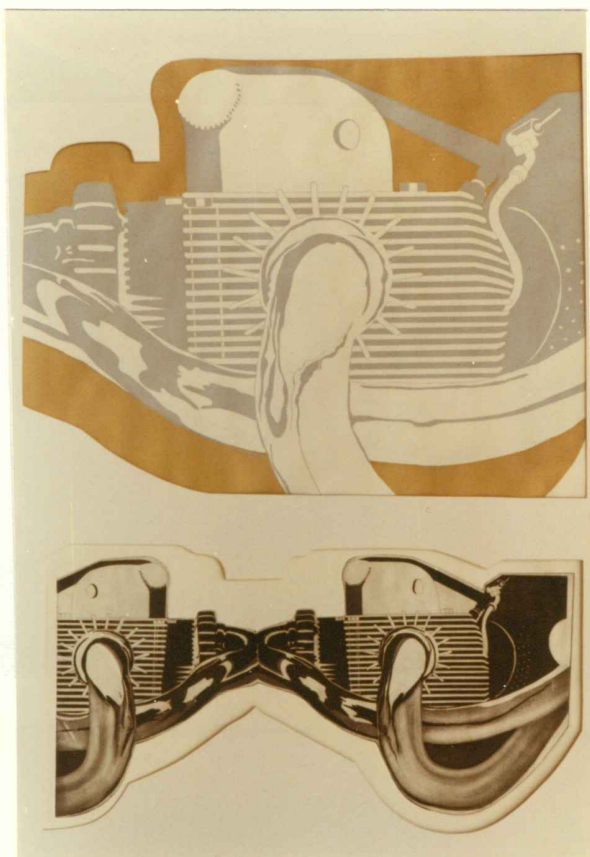


Figure 10
Serigraphy and Etching
with Metallic Inks
(30" x 40½")

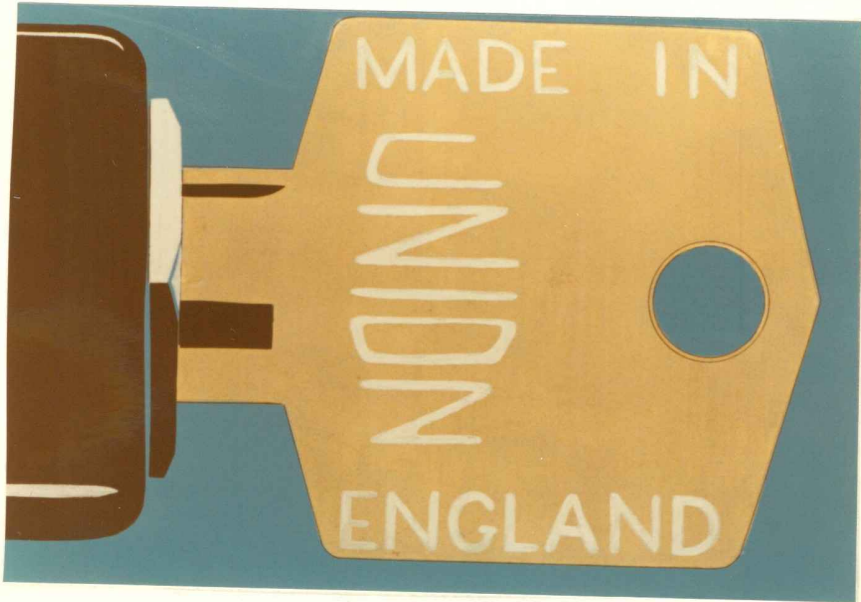


Figure 11

Serigraphy with Metallic Inks
(18" x 20")



Figure 12

Zinc Etching and Airbrush
($22\frac{1}{2}$ " x $30\frac{1}{2}$ ")

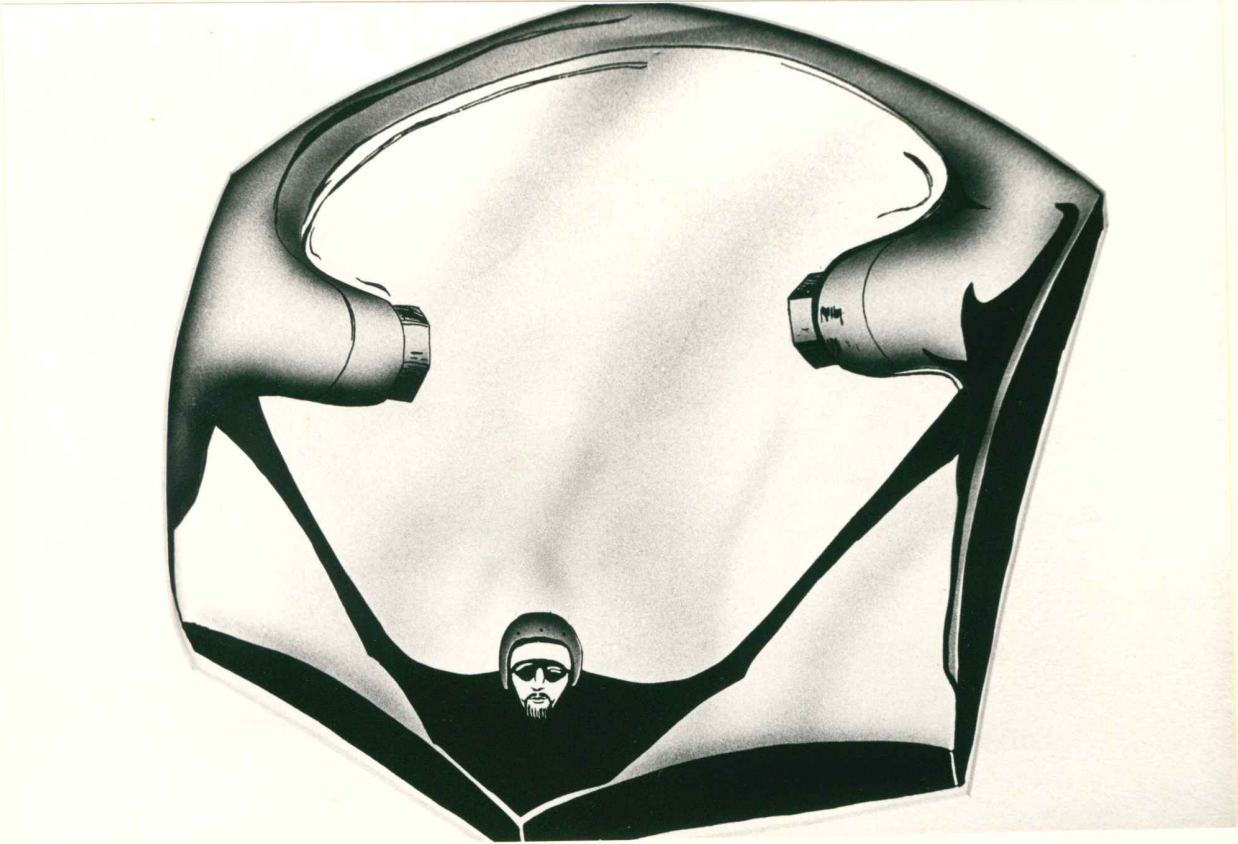


Figure 13

Serigraphy and Airbrush
(16 $\frac{1}{2}$ " x 17")

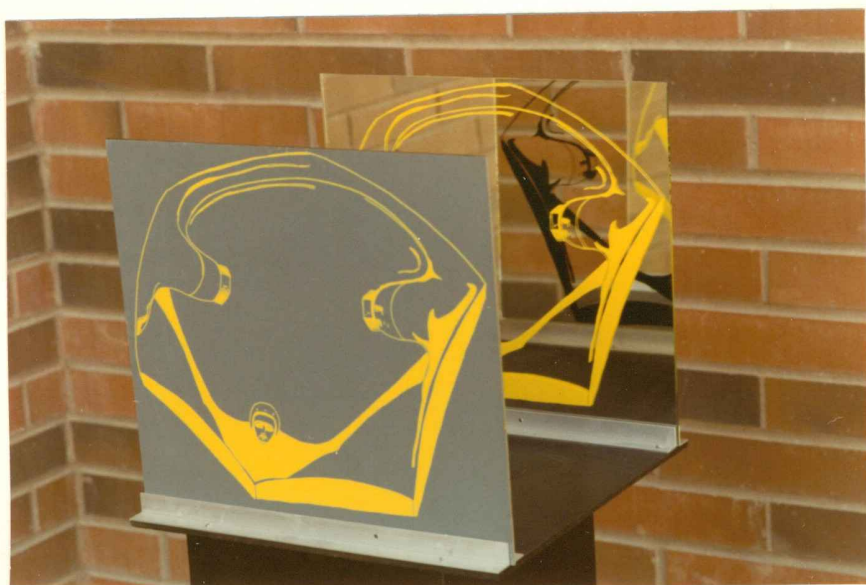


Figure 14

Serigraphy on Mirrors
($52\frac{1}{2}$ " x $14\frac{1}{2}$ " x 14")



Figure 15

Collagraph Embossing and Airbrush
(28" x 44")

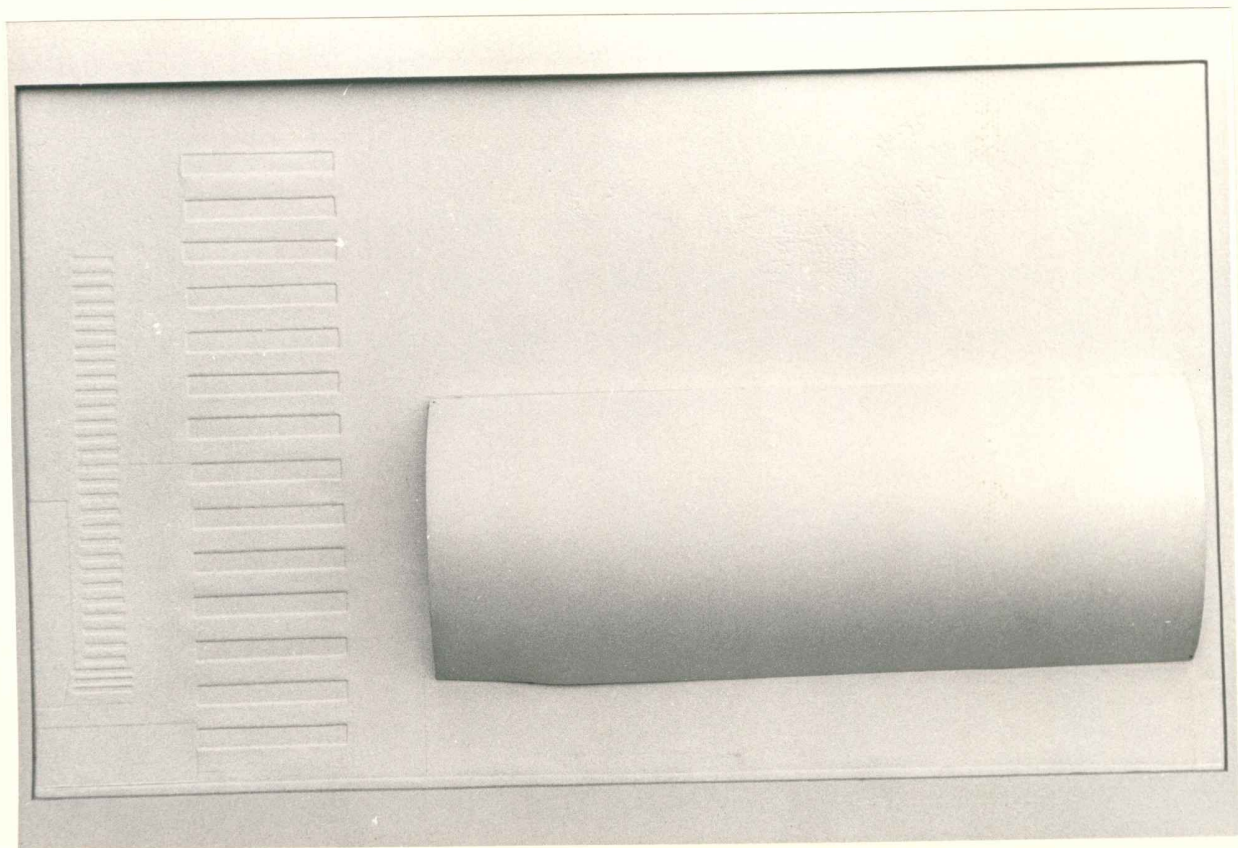


Figure 16
Collagraph Embossing and
Sculptured Paper
(40" x 55")

CONCLUSIONS

The drawings and prints in this series have allowed me to express ideas that I have been contemplating for three years. Now that I have expressed these thoughts, the experiments with embossing, airbrush, and Plexiglas have given me a point of departure for my next series of works. I believe, with the use of Plexiglas and the printing media I used in this series, that I can take printmaking into a three-dimensional direction through constructed forms.